Community Support for C.A.R.E. Strategies

The research evidence is compelling in its support of the idea that partnerships which increase engagement of parents and the community in the public schools are essential to closing the Achievement Gaps. When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

The C.A.R.E. themes (Culture, Ability, Resilience, Effort) are instrumental in helping to close the Achievement Gaps and are supported in part by decisions made at the school and district level. These decisions are essential to sustaining the changes and improvements that the C.A.R.E. themes foster.

This section of the strategy guide is focused on the decisions made at the school and district level to improve community, family and school engagement, to enhance the ability of schools to close the Achievement Gaps and cultivate improvement solutions.

Educators realize that the job of educating students cannot be achieved by schools alone; a collaborative effort combining schools, families and community agencies is most effective. Schools, families and, more importantly, students benefit from community engagement that connects with students' cultures, allows students' abilities to emerge, promotes students' resilience, and motivates them to excellence.

Although parent and community involvement has always been a cornerstone of our schools, that involvement has usually been controlled by the schools. For the most part, "involvement" has focused on fundraising initiatives, volunteering, and supporting school activities. We now understand that new roles for families and the broader community must include deci-sion making, school governance and supportive home learning activities. Thus, we aspire to family engagement that goes beyond involvement.

A recent research report analyzes parent involvement over the past decade, confirming the increase in the display of children's ability when families, parents and the community are engaged in schooling. (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2003) The research indicates that when families are engaged, students:

- Earn higher grades and test scores

- Enroll in higher-level programs

- Pass their classes, are promoted, and earn credits

- Attend school regularly

- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school

- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education

The need to increase family and community support comes at a time when many families and communities are challenged by changing demographics and income gaps. Fewer jobs are providing wages sufficient to meet basic needs, and 21 percent of children live in poverty. More than one million U.S. children ages 5-14 care for themselves during non-school hours and 19 percent of them are growing up in households where a parent is not a high school graduate. Families are stressed by immigration, acculturation, and assimilation pressures.

Children and families that are at the short end of the wealth and income gap, however, d i s play a level of resiliency that must be

acknowledged, supported and nurtured. Research in the area of family resilience has shown that families demonstrating perseverance and resourcefulness in the face of challenging situations can bounce back from stress, crises, and trauma to experience life successes (Hernández-Alarcón, 2004).

Resilient families have a flexible structure, connectedness across the family, and various social and economic resources. Resilience is fostered in the family by belief systems that increase options for resolving problems and promoting healing after a crisis. Communication processes can foster resilience by encouraging open emotional expression and collaborative problem-solving (Walsh, 2003). Schools recognizing these factors in families build systems to support and maximize this resilience. Engaging the community in school decision-making, while creating connections between the school, parents and families also has a positive impact on the effort and motivation of children.

"More than 30 years of research indicate that children benefit from family-school collaborations, which provide parents with opportunities to shape their children's learning."

Heather Weiss,
Harvard Family Research Project

A number of studies have been conducted on the connection between family-school-community partnerships and various aspects of student achievement. On the whole, these studies have confirmed that there is a positive relationship between these partnerships and improved achievement for students, including families of all economic, racial, ethnic and educational backgrounds (Henderson and Mapp, 2003). Additional research found that the grade point average of 10th grade students was significantly affected by parental involvement in the early grades. While the results were true for

Educational Support Professionals—paraeducators, teacher aides, bus drivers, janitors, and others—are often able to connect to the community in ways that teachers and administrators cannot. ESPs tend to live in the community surrounding the school more often, living with the students they serve. They often represent the community that the school serves in their language, ethnicity, and connections to neighborhood organizations. Immigrant parents who are intimidated by teachers because of the language barrier or other cultural issues may be much more willing to talk to their child's bus driver, or teacher aide, or cafeteria worker. Teachers and ESPs should collaborate on building strong community-family-school connections.

all ethnic groups, the research shows that parental involvement is particularly important for Native American students and will actually lead to larger increases in GPA for them than for other ethnic groups.

No matter what their race, ethnicity, or income, most families have high aspirations for their children's success; however, those aspirations may not easily translate into a positive impact on student success and often are reflected in different engagement strategies. While families from ethnic and racial minorities are often actively engaged in their children's schooling, that engagement can differ from the involvement of white, "mainstream" families and may be hidden from the school staff. For example, Chinese-American parents tend to be very active in home-based involvement, drawing on family and community resources to compensate for what schools lacked instead of raising concerns with teachers and administrators.

Research has identified several barriers to the engagement of minority and low-income families in their children's schooling, and these barriers can be overcome. Time

constraints, child care needs, transportation problems, language differences, lack of knowledge and understanding of how U.S. schools work, and varying cultural beliefs about the role of families in the schooling of children are all areas that schools can address.

Schools can build stronger relations with families and communities and strengthen achievement among minority and low-income students by addressing several areas:

- Adopt formal policies at the school and district levels that will promote family involvement and emphasize engaging families that represent the diversity of the student population.

- Ensure the active and on-going support of the school principal in providing leadership for family engagement.

- Focus on identifying ways to honor the hopes and concerns that families have for their children, including an acknowledgement of the commonalities and the differences among students and families.

- Strengthen the capacity of educators to work well with families and develop systems for making outreach to families a priority.

- Identify ways to provide support for immigrant families in understanding how schools work as well as helping families and students understand what schools expect of them.

- Provide families with training and resources that will support early literacy and help them monitor homework.

- Encourage and support student involvement in after-school and extracurricular activities.

- Help low-income families obtain the support and services they need to keep themselves healthy, safe, and well-fed.

- Recognize that it will take time to build trust between families, communities, and schools.

In addition to the research cited above, Dr. Joyce Epstein (1997) addresses six areas of parent involvement that can help in closing the Achievement Gaps:

1. **Parenting**—Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as learners at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

2. **Communicating**—Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective two-way communications. (School to home, home to school)

3. **Volunteering**—Improve recruitment, training, work, and scheduling to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

4. **Learning at Home**—Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.

5. **Decisionmaking**—Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

6. **Collaborating with the Community**—Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, churches and

other groups, and provide services to the community.

Some of the strategies necessary to promote and generate support for community and parental involvement as we work to close the Achievement Gaps include:

1. create a comfortable climate for partnerships

2. enhance family/community access to schools and school personnel

3. enhance learning opportunities for families

4. strengthen communication channels between schools, families and communities.

Our success in closing the student Achievement Gaps grows when we apply what research tells us about the importance of family and community partnerships, looking at them through the lens of culture, abilities, resilience and effort. In the next section, you will find activities and resources to help you build on what research has taught us and use the C.A.R.E. themes in helping us build successful partnerships.

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Community Support: Strategies and Activities At-a-Glance

Strategy	Activity Number
Encouraging engagement in schools	1. Educator Reflection—Assessing Partnerships, page 6-5 2. Educator Reflection—100 Ways to Make Your School Family Friendly, page 6-8
Family support for learning	3. Educator Reflection—Family Support for Learning, page 6-11 4. Interactive Homework–Math in My House, page 6-14 5. Educator Reflection—Learning About Your Community, page 6-17

Activity #1
Educator Reflection— Assessing Partnerships

This form can be used in a school to assess the climate that exists for family and community partnerships. Teachers also can use this evaluation form to assess their own classrooms and the climate that they have created for partnerships.

Directions

1. If possible, involve all staff members in this activity – instructional, support professionals, and administrators – in order to get a broad perspective of the climate of the school.

2. Break the staff into several small groups and give each participant a copy of the handout "Assessing Partnerships (pages 6-6 - 6-7)." If possible, the groups should include representatives of each employee type.

3. Assign each group a specific section of the assessment form ("school climate," "outreach," etc.) and ask them to complete the assessment as a group. Give them ten minutes to complete their portion.

4. Ask each group to report out on their assessment; if more than one group was responsible for a particular section, have both groups share their responses. Reports should include how they answered each question and issues or areas of concern they identified.

5. Allow participants from other groups to respond to what they hear and come to consensus on how each item is rated.

6. When all groups have reported out, use the data generated to discuss how to improve the climate for partnerships and develop an action plan for addressing areas of concern.

Assessing Partnerships

Directions: For each statement, write "yes," or "no," or "unsure."

The School Climate

____ 1. There are signs and welcoming messages that say parents and community are welcome here.

____ 2. Signs and messages are provided in languages other than English if applicable.

____ 3. Family members and community members are welcomed as observers in the classroom.

____ 4. Family members and community members are welcomed as volunteers in the classroom.

____ 5. Adult-sized chairs, besides the teachers', are located throughout the school.

____ 6. Our school has a parent room or parent corner where information is provided to parents in a variety of ways.

____ 7. The mission and vision of our school are posted throughout the school and distributed to parents and the community.

____ 8. Our school has a parent/community involvement plan or policy.

____ 9. Our school parent involvement policy or plan was developed with the input of parents and community members.

____10. All school staff are provided staff development opportunities in family-community involvement.

Outreach

____11. Special efforts are made to involve women and men from different racial and national origin groups in all parent activities.

____ 12. Linkages have been made with community organizations and religious groups which serve the families of children enrolled in our program.

____ 13. Our school buildings are open for use by the community.

____ 14. Liaisons are available to help with parent involvement activities and outreach.

____ 15. A particular effort is made to involve male family members in program activities.

____ 16. Some parent involvement activities take place out in the community.

____ 17. There are efforts to reach families often stereotyped as "hard-to-reach."

Communicating with Parents and Community Members

____ 18. All staff make an effort to communicate regularly and positively with parents.

____ 19. There is a regular school newsletter with information for parents and the community.

____ 20. Parent communications are written clearly and simply using language the family can understand.

____ 21. Curriculum standards and school procedures are clearly communicated to parents at the beginning of each year or when children are enrolled.

____ 22. Positive communication channels are promoted and encouraged with families early in the school year.

____ 23. Communication with families and communities is expressed in multiple ways.

____ 24. School support staff are provided training in communicating with families and community members.

____ 25. Teachers and administrators are provided training in communicating with families and community members.

Policy and Procedures

____ 26. There is an active parent-led organization supported by school staff.

____ 27. Members of the parent organization are representative of the school population by race, gender, and national origin.

____ 28. Parents are trained to be effective team members.

____ 29. Parents and community members are involved in school decision-making teams.

____ 30. Funds and resources are provided to support parent and community involvement.

Parent and Community Activities

____ 31. There are equal opportunities for working parents and community members to attend meetings and activities.

____ 32. Parents are involved in recommending parent and family activities.

____ 33. There are educational activities and training for parents which enable them to work with their own child at home.

____ 34. There are social activities for families and community members that promote interactions with school staff.

____ 35. There are adult education classes for the parents themselves (ESL, GED, exercise classes, etc.).

____ 36. There are parenting-skills workshops for the parents themselves.

____ 37. Parents and community members are involved in assessing the parent/community partnership initiative.

____ 38. There is an updated file of community services and resources for parents and families (e.g., health, social services, financial aid, emergency assistance, etc.).

Reporting Children's Progress to Parents

____ 39. Teachers make an effort to say positive things about the child and emphasize the child's strengths in their progress reports to parents.

____ 40. Teacher concerns about a child's progress are communicated clearly to parents.

____ 41. Parents participate in decisions affecting their child's education.

____ 42. All educational programs and services for their child are explained clearly to parents.

____ 43. Meetings are arranged at the parents' request to discuss parent concerns regarding their child.

____ 44. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at times convenient to the parents as well as the teachers.

____ 45. Transportation arrangements are made for parents to attend parent-teacher conferences if needed.

____ 46. Child-care arrangements are made for meetings and other parent activities if needed.

____ 47. There are teacher/parent/community recognition programs for service to the school.

____ 48. Some parent-school activities offer refreshments and an opportunity for communicating information between school staff and parents.

Activity #2
Educator Reflection—
100 Ways to Make Your School Family Friendly

Here is a "tip sheet" that educators can use to make their schools open and inviting for families.

100 Ways to Make Your School Family Friendly

1) Create a policy for family involvement in your school.

2) Use the word "family" instead of parent when communicating with families.

3) Make sure family involvement is part of your school mission and vision statements.

4) Celebrate the cultures in your community with specific school programs and practices.

5) Celebrate families-of-the-month or week.

6) Create a family or parent center within your school.

7) Designate special family parking to make access to your school easy.

8) Make sure your school entrances and directions are clear and in languages spoken within your community.

9) Train teachers, administrators, and students about the importance of family involvement in schools.

10) Involve families in staff development programs with staff.

11) Give positive feedback to show appreciation to families through notes, telephone calls, and special events.

12) Approach all families with an open mind and positive attitude.

13) LISTEN!

14) Learn children's strengths, talents, and interests through interactions with families.

15) Explain expectations to families in a manner they can understand and support.

16) Set aside appointment times that are convenient for working families.

17) Make family conferences student-led and mandatory at all grade levels.

18) Understand the best ways families receive information from the school and then deliver it that way.

19) Explain school rules and expectations and ask for home support.

20) Create opportunities for informal dialogue with families.

21) Address concerns honestly, openly, and early on.

22) Show support for PTA and other parent and family organizations by attending as often as you can.

23) Create classroom, grade-level, and school newsletters.

24) Maintain and update your Web page.

25) Publish and post your school and office hours.

26) Create a family handbook similar to your student handbook.

27) Have all information available in languages spoken within your school.

28) Use available technology to promote your family involvement goals.

29) Work with families to understand cultural practices that will promote better communication.

30) Listen to family perceptions of how they feel when they visit your school.

31) Listen to family perceptions of how families feel they are treated at your school.

32) Modify school climate based on family and student input.

33) Know the students in your school and their various peer groups.

34) Provide programs on topics of interest to families.

35) Evaluate all of the family meetings you have and move two from the school into the community.

36) Provide family support programs or groups to help families work with their children.

37) Keep abreast of parenting issues to offer assistance to families.

38) Offer parenting classes in child development, discipline, and similar topics.

39) Create and attend fairs and events especially designed to bring all families together.

40) Create a database of families and their special talents, interests, and ways in which they can support school activities. Use this database when calling families to assist in school.

41) Start a family book club.

42) Be available before and after school, and in the evening at specified times and dates.

43) Help teachers understand the importance of family involvement.

44) Evaluate and spruce up the exterior and entrances to your building.

45) Evaluate and repaint areas that need repainting.

46) Remove all graffiti and vandalism within twenty-four hours.

47) Suggest your school be used as a polling place on Election Day.

48) Provide displays and information when community groups are using your school.

49) Create bookmarks with important school information and pass them out to visitors.

50) Evaluate and create a plan for appropriate lighting for evening activities.

51) Allow all families access to your school computer labs and library.

52) Make sure the "reduced speed" signs in the school zone are visible.

53) Allow family members to be involved in the governance of your school.

54) Train parents to participate in school planning and decisionmaking.

55) Provide biographical information about the principal and administration.

56) Publish important telephone and fax numbers in at least five different places.

57) Publish the names of administrators and their phone numbers in every newsletter and on the school Web site.

58) Publish a monthly newsletter.

59) Place all printed information on the school Web site.

60) Increase the number of events geared to families for whom English is their second language.

61) Promote your school logo or mascot on all publications.

62) Create a "brag about" that promotes your school and its programs. Have copies in every visitor area of your school.

63) Provide all staff with business cards.

64) Provide all teachers with telephones in their classrooms.

65) Evaluate the clubs and cocurricular activities at your school to ensure that all students have opportunities for involvement.

66) Increase the percentage of students in clubs and student activities.

67) Schedule a club fair during the school day.

68) Create a plan to articulate more closely with your feeder schools.

69) Find five ways to celebrate and promote your school's diversity.

70) Identify all of the peer groups in your school. Have lunch with each of them monthly.

71) Create a program to bring diverse students together.

72) Ensure school governance opportunities are open to students.

73) Publish a school calendar with pictures that promotes activities about your school.

74) Evaluate all of your school publications for school "jargon."

75) Create classes that help families understand school curriculum.

76) Promote visitation days for families.

77) Publish your school safety and security plan.

78) Train security personnel in family friendly concepts.

79) Establish a nonthreatening sign-in or entrance policy.

80) Send letters home to all families the same day as a problem or negative occurrence in school.

81) Use telecommunications technology to send messages home about school activities.

82) Create family invitations to school functions.

83) Increase the number of school staff involved in student activities and family programs with incentives and grants for extra pay.

84) Provide opportunities to expose students to school activities within the school day.

85) Celebrate the history of your school by providing information to all students and families.

86) Ask families to share their experiences if they attended your school.

87) Involve grandparents in school functions.

88) Ask families to share their cultures with students during the school day.

89) Create experiential learning opportunities by using families in the process.

90) Fill the walls of your school with motivation to families and students.

91) Always thank families for their involvement in your school.

92) Handwrite five thank-you notes to families per month.

93) Create opportunities to recognize and reward all students, staff, and their families.

94) Allow students to organize and implement new student orientation programs.

95) Ask businesses to help you promote family involvement.

96) Find ten businesspersons to provide mentors for your school.

97) Make sure your school governance council has a business liaison.

98) Create a budget for all school assemblies.

99) Increase by 20 percent the number of opportunities for families and teachers to communicate.

100) Believe that family involvement improves the achievement of every student.

NEA's Minority Community Outreach Project (MCOP) reaches out to minority communities in selected states with projects jointly organized and implemented by NEA and its affiliates. Its goal is to create and support a network of NEA members who will organize in the minority community to forge collaborative relationships supportive of public education. In the summer of 2003, Hillsboro, Oregon began meeting in housing project community centers with 20 parents. By December their monthly meetings had moved to an Elementary school and more than 400 parents were attending. The meetings are conducted in English and Spanish with child care activities available for parents while they meet. Meeting topics help educate parents in such matters as enrolling their child, getting vaccinations early, helping children with homework, nutrition, and summer jobs for secondary students. The program has been so successful that one of the organizers was hired by the school district as the district's fulltime community outreach person. Initial results show that there has been less absenteeism and fewer dropouts in the targeted group.

Activity #3
Educator Reflection— Family Support for Learning

Schools can create family learning programs that provide support for student achievement. Parents create a learning environment for their children through the natural, everyday activities and experiences that occur in the home. All families, even families with low literacy skills, are capable of building rich home learning environments. The list on pages 6-12 and 6-13 shares some characteristics of good home learning environments and can be shared with parents in a number of ways, for example:

• Educators can share this information verbally and in writing at open house in a large group presentation.

• Educators can share this information verbally and in writing at a parent conference. This may open up a dialogue that allows teachers to identify areas where they can assist parents.

• The characteristics can be shared and discussed as part of a parent education class.

It may also be useful to have a discussion of these characteristics among the school staff, to identify possible barriers parents may encounter, assistance that schools may need to provide, training opportunities, etc. Education Support Professionals (ESPs) can be especially effective in communicating expectations about home learning environments because they most often come from the neighborhoods and communities of the students. Engaging ESPs in creating events to reach out to family members about what they can do to promote student achievement helps to bridge the gap between home and school.

Creating Successful Home Learning Environments

- Establishing a Daily Family Routine

- Providing time, space, quiet and materials for child's studying, reading and hobbies

- Assigning chores and regular household tasks

- Encouraging good health habits: proper balance of rest and activity, regular breakfast and dinner schedule, good nutrition, health care as needed

Monitoring Out-of-School Activities

- Guiding the constructive use of leisure time: after-school activities, use of TV, and time with friends

- Setting clear rules and standards

- Discussing rules with child

- Rewarding success and applying sanctions appropriately and consistently

Modeling the Value of Learning and Hard Work

- Setting an example by reading at home and engaging in other learning activities

- Encouraging effort for long-term gains vs. short-term benefits

- Playing games together (e.g., Scrabble, Monopoly, dominoes) that require planning ahead and problem solving rather than pure luck

- Communicating openly and encouraging verbal give-and-take

Expressing High but Realistic Expectations for Achievement

- Setting developmentally appropriate goals and standards for child's conduct

- Discussing regularly topics concerning education, careers, life skills, rules

- Affirming personal worth through positive messages and affirming the child as a winner

Encouraging the Child's Overall Development and Progress in School

- Cultivating a warm and supportive home atmosphere

- Expressing interest in child's education both at home and by attending school events

- Urging child to work hard in school

- Staying in touch with child's teachers

- Expressing affection and approval

- Noticing and rewarding achievement in school

Family Support for Learning

Reading, Writing, and Discussion among Family Members

• Reading and listening to children read

• Discussing school day, family members' lives, and current events

• Storytelling, recounting experiences, and sharing problem-solving strategies

• Writing of all kinds (e.g., grocery lists, telephone messages, letters, diary entries)

• Relating everyday experiences to what is being learned in school, and using these experiences as teaching opportunities

• Helping students expand their vocabulary

• Conducting family activities that help students expand their view of the world

Using Community Resources to Meet Family Needs

• Exposing children to cultural activities (e.g., visits to library, museums, movies, concerts)

• Enrolling children in youth enrichment programs (e.g., after-school sports or lessons, community programs, clubs)

• Introducing children to responsible mentors (e.g., coaches, counselors, friends, staff of local organizations or churches)

• Using visits to the library to expand learning opportunities and develop interests

(From NEA Membership and Organizing, *Family-School-Community Partnerships Training Manual*, 2004).

A+ Activity #4
Interactive Homework–Math in My House

Successful family learning programs involve both generations. In some learning programs, children and adults learn side by side. In others, they learn separately. In still others, they do both. Adults acquire skills, as needed, for their own benefit and to model learning for their children. They also acquire specific skills they can apply in helping their children learn. What unites all of the activities under the heading "family learning" is the goal to assist children, directly or indirectly, in acquiring the skills necessary to become life-long learners. One way to do this is through a "homework partnership" as you see in the following handout. By structuring homework to be more interactive between families, students, and teachers, learning can be enhanced for both students and their families.

Interactive Homework: A Three-Way Partnership

Requires students to:

• Talk to someone at home about what they are learning in class

• Share their work, ideas and progress with their families

• Think, write, then teach parents the lesson and discuss the outcomes

Requires parents to:

• Become involved in their child's learning

• Share thoughts, ideas, insights and experiences with their child

• Comment on their child's work and progress

• Request information from teachers in a communication session

Requires teachers to:

• Communicate with families about how to work and interact with their children at home

• Guide involvement and interaction

• Design homework that elicits family participation

• Clarify homework objectives, processes and evaluation procedures

(From NEA Membership and Organizing, *Family-School-Community Partnerships Training Manual*, 2004).

One example of interactive homework is found in this math activity developed by the WEEA Equity Resource Center.

Activity: Math in My House

Grades: 3-9
Duration: 20-40 minutes
Materials: Graph paper or chalkboard, "Math in My House" worksheet (page 6-16), calculator
Objective: • To make students aware of the various ways their family members use mathematics in their daily lives
             • To help involve parents in their children's math education
             • To reinforce math concepts and skills (Computing and interpreting statistics, calculating percentages, constructing bar and circle graphs)

Preparation

1. Design a tally sheet on which students may record their answers.

2. Plan the questions students will use to interview their parents or other family members about the ways their family members use mathematics or math skills. Prepare some key questions such as:

- How do you use math to pay bills?

- How do you use math to do taxes?

- How do you use math to invest?

- How do you use math to budget?

- How do you use math to cook?

- How do you use math to sew?

- How do you use math to do woodworking?

- How do you use math to garden?

3. Using their math books as a resource, students might also prepare a list of key topics, for instance, rounding whole numbers and decimals, addition and subtraction of decimals, problem solving, reading graphs and charts, using geometric concepts, and so forth. They can ask their parents how they use these skills at home.

4. After the interview, have each student categorize and tally their family data. Have students prepare data summaries, graphs and charts, and figure averages. Ideas for data summaries are listed below. The summaries can be done in small groups or by the whole class.
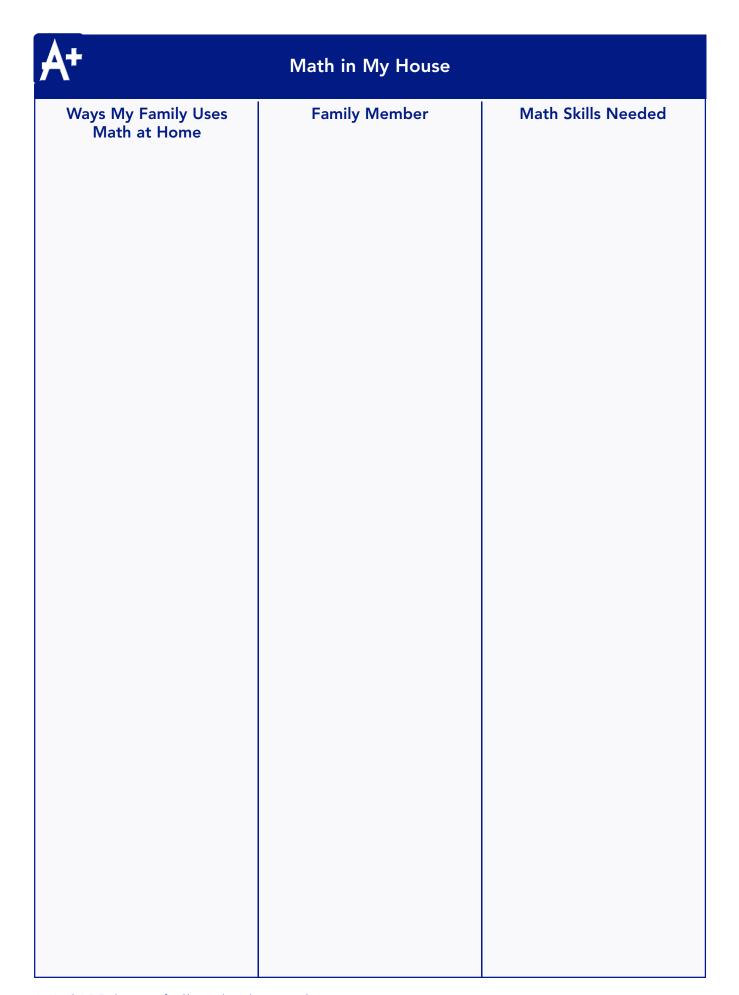
Ideas for data summaries

1. What math skills are used most often at home? Have students count and tally the number of times each math skill was mentioned by their family members, and combine to find class totals. Make a bar graph to display the data for the 6 to 12 most frequently used skills.

2. Which family member uses math skills in the most ways at home? Have the class tally the number of ways math skills are used by their fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, etc. They can then compute averages for each type of family member and make a table to display their findings.

3. Which types of home activities are most often mentioned as requiring math skills? Have the class decide on how they want to categorize home activities. Suggestions include:

- Housework—cooking, yardwork, and repairs

- Financial—paying bills, preparing taxes, and creating budgets

- Shopping—for groceries, clothes, gifts, or household needs

- Leisure activities–woodworking, sewing, gardening, and other hobbies

4. Combine the data for the entire class, and make a circle graph that shows the major types of activities and the percentage of times each was mentioned by family members. For example, your students may find a class total of 600 ways math is used at home. They might determine that 50 percent of these "ways" were in the financial area, 15 percent in housework, 30 percent in shopping, and 5 percent in leisure activities.

This activity can be expanded to survey the ways parents or other family members use math on their jobs.

Math in My House

Ways My Family Uses Math at Home	Family Member	Math Skills Needed

Activity #5
Educator Reflection—Learning About Your Community

The following suggestions and questions are intended to serve as guides for the teacher to have ways to draw upon the knowledge, culture, language, and experiences of families and other members of the school's community:

Classroom Applications

I. Relationships/Building a Community of Learners

In order to build a community of learners there must be a trusting relationship in place. The following are suggestions about how to develop a community of learners with the families in a particular classroom.

- **Community Building**
  - Invite families to attend an evening of entertainment and information where students present what they are learning and family members have the opportunity to interact informally.

- **Recognition**
  - Develop ways to recognize positive things students do in school (awards assemblies, recognition awards.)
  - Develop ways to recognize parents for the positive things they do to help their children succeed.

- **Ongoing Contact**
  - Develop regular communication with parents via phone calls, home visits, newsletters.
  - Schedule regular meetings throughout the year where parents contribute to the agenda.

II. Defining the Community

How will you define the "community?" How can you find out what the issues are in the community and bring them to the classroom? (e.g. immigration, zoning, new commercial developments, community events). The following give suggestions about how to answer these questions:

- Use community newspapers as a resource.

- Listen to people who know the community and use them as bridges.

- Plan community field trips.

- Listen to student voices through such activities as the "morning message" where students have opportunity to give news about their communities.

III. Teachers/Students As Ethnographers

How will you gain information about the households of your students? How will you negotiate the topics with parents and students? Some suggestions are:

- Teacher gains information through home visit.

- Students interview their parents through homework logs. Topics might be:
  - histories (family, residential, labor)
  - chores
  - interaction styles
  - daily activities
  - literacy

IV. Developing Authentic Curriculum

How will you develop curriculum from household knowledge gained through ethnographic methods? (Refer to III above.) What types of support will you need?

Jeanne Gibbs, *TRIBES: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. (Windsor, CA: CenterSource Systems, 2001) p.1095.